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August 28, 1959

Mrs. Albert D. Lasker
Villa Fiorentina, St. Jean
Cap Ferrat, Alps Maritime
France

Dear Mary:

Just a note to bring you up to date:

1. Jane said on the phone the other day that you were curious as to how much effect the President's very negative message accompanying the signing of our bill would have. There is general agreement that Secretary Flemming will use the criteria set up in the message to slow up the appropriation process.

Secretary Flemming has called a meeting of key members of the various Advisory Councils for Tuesday, September 1. Farber, Ravdin and DeBakey have been invited, among others. The announced purpose of the meeting is to discuss the criteria as they relate to Council actions during the coming year.

2. This leads directly into the question of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee investigation of the medical research programs of the National Institutes of Health. Senator Hill called a meeting of the subcommittee this past Tuesday to get their approval for the names I had submitted. He was quite surprised at the critical attitude of some of the subcommittee members. Both Senators Pastore and Stennis talked about the vast increase in medical research funds for the NIH and they said they had received a great deal of mail critical of such a large increase. Senator Margaret Smith, who has always been in our corner, agreed and said that most of the considerable volume of mail she was receiving was in favor of the President's position. Even old Carl Hayden agreed that this public reaction was serious.

There was a general consensus of the Senators present at the meeting that several businessmen be appointed to the Committee to take a tough look at the whole NIH program. Hill was forced to accede to this request and we are now going through a list of names. I enclose a list of the consultants who have already accepted.

This investigation will be an extraordinarily difficult one, and I worry about not having the manpower

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(List Incomplete)

Purpose: Through a broad educational campaign, to create public understanding and support of the 10-point Bill of Rights for the mentally ill adopted by the 1954 National Governors' Conference on Mental Health. To convince the American people to actively support federal, state and local preventive mental health programs emphasizing research, training and expanded clinic and community services designed to treat and cure mental illness in its early stages.

and the time for it. Senator Hill is very worried and he has taken an amazingly long time in approving the consultants and setting up the first meeting. In a discussion with Farber and Hill the other day, we all agreed that the pressure for this kind of investigation was a side effect of our getting into the big leagues. Just a few years ago we were getting too little money to justify any criticism of excessive spending; now and each year from now on we must expect powerful demands that we document our case very carefully.

For example, Senator Smith told Hill that since she was running for reelection next year she would need some powerful arguments to counteract the adverse mail she has been receiving and the criticism of her by Administration officials.

3. The Administration's tough position will continue through fiscal 1961. Take the Veterans Administration as an example. As you may remember, we got the VA medical research figure up to \$18,834,000 this year, of which \$1,500,000 is for research construction. The VA requested \$20,344,000 for fiscal 1961, of which \$3,000,000 was for research construction. On August 21, Dr. Cummings was notified that the budget for fiscal 1961 would be \$15,344,000. This is \$3,500,000 under the fiscal 1960 budget. I enclose a letter from the Controller of the Department of Medicine and Surgery which contains its own chilling eloquence.

Dr. Cummings, who is fed up with the whole business, is leaving October 1. His successor is Dr. James Musser, hand picked by Dr. Middleton.

4. The International Medical Research bill is still bogged down. Senator Hill has had two meetings with Congressman Roberts in the last week but to really no avail. Hill has also worked on Congressman Harris.

The Committee has been flooded with wires and letters since the close of the hearings on August 6. I have in my folder more than 40 letters and wires from Arkansas to Harris, largely inspired by Dr. Howard Rusk. Some of these come from presidents of oil companies, the Commerce and Industry Association of New York, etc. Dr. Rusk has done a magnificent job; in all the years I have been down here I have never seen such pressure applied. On Monday of this week Dr. Rusk arranged for Dr. Thomas Dooley to send wires to all the members of the Committee.

5. I enclose the speech which Senator Hill will deliver in Birmingham on October 5. This is an exceedingly

Mrs. Lasker

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important speech for Senator Hill, since he has been deeply bothered by the editorial and other criticism in Alabama of his actions on medical research. The speech has been extraordinarily difficult to write -- it has gone through four drafts -- because Hill has sweated over each draft with the idea of selling the doctors of Alabama that he is not their sworn enemy.

Cordially,

M. K.

⁴
3 enclosures

MG:1mb

*Leave him
Ask other
what? to
criticism
why? was it
pleased just
that one?
editorial?*